

## **EXERCISE TYPES**

Following are descriptions of the various exercise types provided in HSEEP Volume I: Overview and Doctrine.

### **Discussion-Based Exercises**

Discussion-based exercises are normally used as a starting point in the building block approach to the cycle, mix, and range of exercises. Discussion-based exercises include seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises (TTXs), and games. These types of exercises typically highlight existing plans, policies, mutual aid agreements, and procedures. Thus, they are exceptional tools for familiarizing agencies and personnel with current or expected jurisdictional capabilities. Discussion-based exercises typically focus on strategic, policy-oriented issues, and operations-based exercises tend to focus more on tactical response-related issues. Facilitators and/or presenters usually lead the discussion, keeping participants on track while meeting the objectives of the exercise.

#### **Seminars**

Seminars are generally employed to orient participants to, or provide an overview of, authorities, strategies, plans, policies, procedures, protocols, response resources, or concepts and ideas. Seminars provide a good starting point for jurisdictions that are developing or making major changes to their plans and procedures. They offer the following attributes:

- Low-stress environment employing a number of instruction techniques, such as lectures, multimedia presentations, panel discussions, case study discussions, expert testimony, and decision support tools.
- Informal discussions led by a seminar leader.
- Atmosphere that is not constrained by real-time portrayal of events.
- Effectiveness with both small and large groups.

#### **Workshops**

Workshops usually focus on development of a product by the attendees. Organization of attendees into functional groups, aided by facilitators and the use of breakout sessions, are common. Final results are often presented and approved in a plenary session. In conjunction with exercise development, workshops are most useful in planning specific aspects of exercise design, such as:

- Determining program or exercise objectives
- Developing exercise scenario and key events listings
- Determining evaluation elements and standards of performance
- A narrow focus, measured against established standards
- Instant feedback
- Realistic environment
- Performance in isolation
- Performance as a subset of full-scale exercises (FSEs)

## **Games**

A game is a simulation of operations that often involves two or more teams, usually in a competitive environment, using rules, data, and procedures designed to depict an actual or assumed real-life situation. It does not involve the use of actual resources, but the sequence of events affects, and is in turn affected by, the decisions made by the players.

Players are commonly presented with scenarios and asked to perform a task associated with the scenario episode. Each episode then moves to the next level of detail or complexity, taking into account the players' earlier decisions. The decisions made by game participants determine the flow of the game. The goal is to explore decision-making processes and the consequences of decisions. In a game, the same situation can be examined from different perspectives by changing variables and parameters that guide player actions. Large-scale games are multi-jurisdictional and can include active participation from local to national levels of government. Games stress the importance of the planners' and players' understanding and comprehension of interrelated processes.

With the evolving complexity and sophistication of current simulations, there are increased opportunities to provide enhanced realism for game participants. The use of computer-generated scenarios and simulations can provide a more realistic and time-sensitive method of introducing situations for analysis. Planner decisions can be input and models run to show the effect of decisions made during a game. Games are excellent vehicles for the following:

- Gaining policy or process consensus
- Conducting "what-if" analyses of existing plans
- Developing new plans

## **Tabletop Exercises**

Tabletop exercises (TTXs) involve senior staff, elected or appointed officials, or other key staff in an informal setting to discuss simulated situations. This type of exercise is intended to stimulate discussion of various issues regarding a hypothetical situation. It can be used to assess plans, policies, and procedures, or to assess the types of systems needed to guide the prevention of, response to, and recovery from the defined event. TTXs are typically aimed at facilitating the understanding of concepts, identifying strengths and shortfalls, and/or achieving a change in attitude. Participants are encouraged to discuss issues in depth and develop decisions through slow-paced problem solving, rather than rapid, spontaneous decision making that occurs under actual or simulated emergency conditions. In contrast to the scale and cost of exercises and games, TTXs can be a cost-effective tool when used in conjunction with more complex exercises. The TTX's effectiveness is derived from the energetic involvement of participants and their assessment of recommended revisions to current policies, procedures, and plans.

There are two categories of TTXs: basic and advanced. In a basic TTX, the scene set by the scenario materials remains constant. The scene describes an event or emergency incident, and brings participants up to the simulated present time. Players apply their knowledge and skills to a list of problems presented by the leader/moderator. Problems are discussed as a group, and resolution is generally agreed upon, and then summarized by the leader. In an advanced TTX, play revolves around delivery of prescript messages to players that alter the original scenario.

The exercise controller (moderator) usually introduces problems one at a time, in the form of a written message, simulated telephone call, videotape, or other means. Participants discuss the issues raised by the problem, using appropriate plans and procedures.

Activities in a TTX may include:

- Practicing group problem solving
- Familiarizing senior officials
- Conducting a specific case study
- Examining personnel contingencies
- Testing group message interpretation
- Participating in information sharing
- Assessing interagency coordination
- Achieving limited or specific objectives

## **Operations-Based Exercises**

Operations-based exercises represent the next iteration of the exercise cycle; they are used to validate the plans, policies, agreements, and procedures solidified in discussion-based exercises. Operations-based exercises include drills, functional exercises (FEs), and FSEs. They can clarify roles and responsibilities, identify gaps in resources needed to implement plans and procedures, and improve individual and team performance. Operations-based exercises are characterized by actual response, mobilization of apparatus and resources, and commitment of personnel, usually over an extended period of time.

### **Drills**

A drill is a coordinated, supervised activity usually employed to test a single specific operation or function in a single agency. Drills are commonly used to provide training in the use of new equipment, to develop or test new policies or procedures, or to practice and maintain current skills. Typical attributes include:

### **Functional Exercises**

The functional exercise (FE) is designed to test and evaluate individual capabilities, multiple functions or activities within a function, or interdependent groups of functions. It is generally focused on exercising the plans, policies, procedures, and staffs of the direction and control nodes of Incident Command and Unified Command. Events are usually projected through an exercise scenario, with event updates that drive activity at the management level. The movement of equipment and personnel is simulated.

The objective of the FE is to execute specific plans and procedures and apply established policies, plans, and procedures under crisis conditions, within a particular function or by a specific team. The FE simulates the reality of operations in a functional area by presenting complex and realistic problems that require rapid and effective responses by trained personnel in a highly stressful environment.

Activities in an FE include:

- Evaluating functions
- Evaluating emergency operations centers (EOCs), headquarters, and staff
- Reinforcing established policies and procedures
- Measuring the adequacy of resources
- Examining inter-jurisdictional relationships

### **Full-Scale Exercises**

In an FSE, response elements are required to mobilize and deploy to a designated site or locate in response to a simulated attack, generally for an extended period. Actual mobilization and movement of personnel and resources are required to demonstrate coordination and response capability. EOCs and field command posts are activated. The FSE is the largest, costliest, and most complex exercise type and may involve participation at the State, local, regional, and Federal levels. Although prescribed events may be used, the exercise is primarily driven by player actions and decisions.

The FSE is used to evaluate the operational capabilities of systems, functional interfacing, and interaction during an extended period. It involves testing a major portion of operations plans and overall organization under field conditions. Activities in an FSE may include:

- Assessing organizational or individual performance.
- Demonstrating interagency cooperation.
- Allocating resources and personnel.
- Assessing equipment capabilities.
- Activating personnel and equipment locations.
- Assessing inter-jurisdictional cooperation.
- Exercising public information systems.
- Testing communications systems and procedures.
- Analyzing memoranda of understanding (MOUs), standard operating procedures (SOPs), plans, policies, and procedures.

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAR	After-Action Report
CBRNE	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive
COBRA	Chemical, Ordnance, Biological, Radiological
CPWG	Commonwealth Preparedness Working Group
DOJ	Department of Justice
DP04	Determined Promise 2004
EOC	Emergency Operations Command
EPW	Exercise Planning Workshop
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FE	Functional Exercise
FSE	Full-Scale Exercise
G	Games (Simulation)
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
IP	Improvement Plan
LEMOC	Local Emergency Management Operations Course
MIPT	Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCR	National Capital Region
NRC	Nuclear Regulatory Commission
OCP	Office of Commonwealth Preparedness
ODP	Office for Domestic Preparedness
OJP	Office of Justice Programs
SHSS	State Homeland Security Strategy
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SVP	Secure Virginia Panel
TTX	Tabletop Exercise
USDHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
VOPEX	Virginia Operations Plan Exercise
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
X	Unknown Exercise Type